

A CONSUMER CONTROLLED COUNCIL COMMITTED TO ENSURING QUALITY REHABILITATION SERVICES

REPORT OF THE NEBRASKA

State Rehabilitation Council

CONTACT INFORMATION:

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) values the input and involvement of all citizens in Nebraska regarding rehabilitation services. All SRC meetings are open to the public and are a great opportunity for the public to voice concerns and opinions.

MEETINGS:

Meeting dates, times and locations are posted on the Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation web site at www.vr.nebraska.gov

WRITE:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Letter from the SRC Chairperson | 1 |
|--|-----|
| SRC Members & Committee Reports2 | -4 |
| Message from the Nebraska VR Director | . 5 |
| Annual Program Costs | . 5 |
| Nebraskans Served by Nebraska VR | . 6 |
| Partnerships with Employers & Nebraska VR | . 7 |
| Return on Investment for the Nebraska VR Program | . 7 |
| Nehraska VR Client Success Stories | Q |



October 3, 2012

To the Citizens of the State of Nebraska:

On behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), I am pleased to present to you the 2011-2012 Annual Report. The SRC has continued to work closely with Nebraska VR (Vocational Rehabilitation) to improve and advocate for employment services for individuals who experience a disability.

Working in partnership with Nebraska VR, the SRC heard reports and legislative updates from the Director of Nebraska VR. Reports were shared from the SRC committees, the Client Assistance Program, Statewide Independent Living Council, Assistive Technology Partnership, and the Nebraska Youth Leadership Council.

The Council supported and participated in the following:

- Exchanged information with state senators at the Fifth Annual Senator Luncheon.
- Conferenced with RSA staff by phone to exchange ideas and share challenges faced by VR.
- Explored a new marketing strategy to include a new logo and innovative ways to market the brand.
- Planned outreach focus groups centered around the Latino population and the deaf and hard of hearing population.
- Designed a survey for businesses not working with VR to find out what VR can do to encourage partnership.
- Recognized three businesses and presented the first Alumni Award during the Entrepreneur of Distinction Award ceremony.

As we look to the future, the SRC and Nebraska VR will continue to work together for employment solutions for our Nebraska VR recipients. I thank the Nebraska VR staff and the members of the SRC for their diligence and dedication to improving the quality of life through employment for those who experience disabilities. Together we can change lives.

Best regards,

Susan L. Gieschen

Susan L. Gieschen, Chairperson Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council

Lisa has been a Nebraska VR Counselor in the South Sioux City office since July 2003. She serves on the Client Services Committee.

Lisa Alexa-S. Sioux City



Mitch is the President of Preferred Partners, LLC, an Omaha based recruiting company. He is a member of the SRC's Employer Services Committee.

Mitch Arnold—Omaha



Barb is in Human Resources Compliance and Regulations at Novartis. She serves on the Employer Services Committee.

Barb Benes—Lincoln



Sharon Bloechle—Omaha

Sharon is the parent of an adult son with disabilities and has been a member of Learning Disabilities Association of Nebraska for over thirty years. She serves on the Client Services Committee.

Susan (Sue) has a son who experiences a

learning disability. Sue



is on the Employer Services Committee and the Chairperson for the Council.

Susan Gieschen—Brule

SRC Committee Reports

Client Services Committee

Members: Lisa Alexa, Sharon Bloechle, Tim Kolb, Leslie Novacek, Debra Osentowski, Larry Niemeyer, Vicki Rasmussen, and Joni Thomas (Chair)

Don Crouch - VR Advisor

During the past year, members of the Client Services Committee focused on the following activities:

• The Committee explored different approaches to gathering information from clients. It was decided that a phone interview would be developed. One hundred cases closed unsuccessfully after eligibility, after eligibility and before plan, and after plan were contacted by phone through an independent contractor. The Committee reviewed the data and found that only 43 people of the potential 300 took the survey. As a result of the inadequate responses through the phone, the

Committee recommended that VR consider a public forum or focus group approach.

- Results from the Post Closure Survey are distributed and reviewed at every meeting. The Committee recommended that VR teams review this post-closure data on a quarterly basis.
- The Post Closure Survey questions were modified.
- The Committee recommended piloting an Outreach Focus Group in Lincoln, and one other location.
 The focus groups will be organized with the Latino population and the deaf and hard of hearing population.
- The Consumer Input Committee provided comments about the best way to market information to individuals and families who may be looking for Nebraska VR services.



Joni is the Executive Director of the Center for Independent Living of Central Nebraska. She is the Chairperson of the Client Services Committee.

Joni Thomas—Grand Island

Client Services Committee Chairperson

Employer Services Committee

Members: Mitch Arnold, Barb Benes, Sue Gieschen, April Isaacs, Mark Schultz, and Jason Kerkman (Chair)

Jim Coyle - VR Advisor

The Employment Committee goals were to survey businesses, continue outreach to minorities, evaluate the effectiveness of Project Search and the Certificate Program, and explore statewide marketing.

The committee recommended the following to Nebraska VR:

- Survey businesses not working with Nebraska VR to learn why they do not partner with Nebraska VR.
- Connect the Lincoln VR office with the Human Services Federation.
- Provide presence at minority events with a table or booth.
- Hold focus groups in minority communities to learn of views of Nebraska VR.
- Investigate partnership opportunities with local minority organizations.

- Continue evaluation of Project Search and the Certificate Program during the next year.
- Hire a marketing coordinator for outreach and marketing.

The SRC congratulated Nebraska VR for the expansion of the Project Search Program and the Certificate Program. The Walmart Distribution center in Western Nebraska received a national award for their Project Search partnership.

The SRC held its annual luncheon for Senators. The luncheon educated the attendees about the services offered by Nebraska VR and the positive impact Nebraska VR is having on the citizens of Nebraska.

The SRC hosted the Fifth Annual Entrepreneur of Distinction Award presentation. Three self-employed individuals received the honor. The SRC added the Entrepreneur of Distinction Alumni Award to recognize a past recipient for continued business success.

Jason is a Community Health Educator with Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services. He serves as the Chairperson of the SRC's Employer Services Committee.





Iason Kerkman—Lincoln



Gayle Hahn—Hastings

Gayle is the Community Work Incentive Coordinator at Easter Seals Nebraska. She serves on the SRC's Transition Services Committee



April Isaacs—Lincoln

April is the Human Resource Business Partner and Recruitment Specialist with Saint Elizabeth Regional Medical Center. She is a member of the SRC's Employer Services Committee.



Sherri Kelley—Omaha

Sherri works for PTI Nebraska (Parent Training and Information for Families of Children with Disabilities). She serves on the Transition Services Committee.



Seamus Kelly—Omaha

Seamus is employed at PTI Nebraska (Parent Training and Information for Families of Children with Disabilities). He is a member of the Transition Services Committee.



Tim Kolb—Franklin

Tim was born with a rare form of Muscular Dystrophy known as Werdnig-Hoffman Syndrome. He has been a long time activist on disability issues. Tim serves on the SRC's Client Services Committee.

SRC Committee Reports



Larry has been employed with VR for over thirty-seven years. He is a member of the Client Services

Larry Niemeyer-Norfolk





Leslie is the Director of the Assistive Technology Partnership. She serves on the Client Services Committee.

Leslie Novacek-Lincoln



Debra joined the SRC as a parent of a son who has learning disabilities resulting from Epilepsy. She is a member of the Client Services Committee.

Debra Osentowski-Geneva



Vicki is the Director of the Nebraska Client Assistance Program (CAP). She is a member of the Client Services Committee.

Complications from

unable to continue

a transplant left Terry

Vicki Rasmussen—Lincoln



working. Terry contacted VR and successfully received services. He serves on the Transition Services Terry L. Wilson—Indianola Committee.

Transition Services Committee

Members: Gayle Hahn, Sherri Kelley, Seamus Kelly, Terry Wilson and Vicki Obrecht (Chair)

Jack Shepard/Mark Mason-VR Advisor

The Transition Committee's continued focus was to keep students and parents actively involved in the transition process. Committee suggestions included the continued use of technology such as the iPads, sharing Nebraska VR videos during IEP meetings, spotlighting recent high school graduates in his or her school newsletter, and posting the new VR logo prominently in schools.

An RSA visit brought praise for the transition process and a few changes. The consent form has been replaced with a referral form to allow Nebraska VR to establish eligibility and begin to provide services to students. This will make the transition process more focused.

The Certificate Program has expanded to seven sites and gained attention from other agencies. The three-way partnership is used to facilitate VR consumers acquiring specific vocational skills from a community college. Skills are targeted to the needs of local employers.

Project Search is an internship program for high school students with disabilities that teaches independent living and job skills. It has continued to expand to include a variety of partnerships with hospitals, hotels, and a business distribution center.

The Nebraska Youth Leadership Council continues to grow throughout Nebraska. The Council looks to promote the development of a fifth regional council in the western part of the state.

The committee supports Nebraska VR's work with students and parents to make the transition process a positive and productive experience.



Vicki Obrecht—Lincoln

Vicki is the Special Education Coordinator for Lincoln Southeast High School. She is the Chairperson of the Transition Services Committee.

Transition Services Committee Chairperson

Message from the Nebraska VR Director



Mark Schultz, Director

Recently, I asked members of the SRC what they envision Nebraska VR should look like in 5 years. The expectation varied a lot, but there was a common theme: we cannot be in exactly the same place we are now. The world is changing around us and so are the needs of the individuals who look to us for services and support. To that end, SRC has been a key partner in shaping the agency's direction for the future.

Recognizing the changing demographics of our state, the SRC assisted the agency in developing strategies to reach out to underserved groups as identified in our state plan. At the suggestion of the SRC, and through their Consumer Input Committee, our outreach and marketing materials were reviewed, and are soon to be revised, to ensure the content is conveying the message in a way that's understandable for the intended market.

However, it isn't enough to change our message if we haven't changed the way we do business. SRC members were challenged with a list of VR policies and procedures to determine their relevancy for today, and to recommend how to revise them, if necessary, to prepare us for the problems we'll face tomorrow. As an example, business representatives on the SRC felt more flexibility in staff schedules would increase staff availability through extended office hours, while also serving as a retention strategy for staff who would benefit from a four day work week. In a pilot test of the policy (about 1/3 of staff are working a non-traditional work week), offices are reporting that many clients have taken advantage of early and late office hours to meet with staff.

We are continuing this process into 2013 and I fully, expect with the help of the SRC, we will work together to stay relevant to the individuals coming to VR today and to position ourselves to be the agency of tomorrow.

Mark Schultz, Director Nebraska VR

Annual Program Costs

| | Cost of Program |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Administration | \$3,119,585.00 |
| | |
| | |
| CLIENT SERVICES | |
| | Cost of Program |
| Provided by VR Staff | \$11,432,198.00 |
| Purchased from Community | |
| Rehab Programs | \$1,380,390.00 |
| Purchased from Other Vendors | \$5,943,477.00 |
| Total | \$18,756,065.00 |
| | |
| PURCHASED FOR CLIENTS | |
| | Cost of Program |
| Assessment | \$423,338.00 |
| Higher Education | \$1,505,043.00 |
| Miscellaneous Training | \$584,853.00 |
| Maintenance | \$169,249.00 |
| Personal Assistance Services | \$34,724.00 |
| | \$263,238.00 |
| Transportation | |
| Rehabilitation Technology Services | \$1,514,725.00 |
| Small Business Enterprise | \$317,502.00 |
| All Other Services | \$2,511,195.00 |
| Total | \$7,323,867.00 |

Nebraskans Served by Nebraska VR

CONSUMERS SERVED BY COUNTY

| County | Total | County | Tota |
|-----------|-------|--------------|------|
| Adams | 214 | Jefferson | 24 |
| Antelope | 26 | Johnson | |
| Arthur | 1 | Kearney | 33 |
| Banner | 1 | Keith | |
| Blaine | 1 | Keya Paha | 2 |
| Boone | 37 | Kimball | |
| Box Butte | 21 | Knox | 17 |
| Boyd | 7 | Lancaster | 1071 |
| Brown | 5 | Lincoln | 239 |
| Buffalo | 237 | Logan | 3 |
| Burt | 14 | Loup | 2 |
| Butler | 54 | Madison | |
| Cass | 32 | McPherson | 3 |
| Cedar | 26 | Merrick | |
| Chase | 3 | Morrill | 15 |
| Cherry | | Nance | 21 |
| Cheyenne | 44 | Nemaha | |
| Clay | 31 | Nuckolls | |
| Colfax | 30 | Otoe | 39 |
| Cuming | | Pawnee | |
| Custer | 57 | Perkins | |
| Dakota | 70 | Phelps | |
| Dawes | 33 | Pierce | |
| Dawson | | Platte | |
| Deuel | | Polk | 22 |
| Dixon | | Red Willow | |
| Dodge | | Richardson | |
| Douglas | | Rock | 3 |
| Dundy | | Saline | |
| Fillmore | | Sarpy | |
| Franklin | | Saunders | 51 |
| Frontier | | Scotts Bluff | 162 |
| Furnas | | Seward | |
| Gage | | Sheridan | |
| Garden | | Sherman | |
| Garfield | | Stanton | |
| Gosper | | Thayer | |
| Grant | | Thomas | |
| Greeley | | Thurston | |
| Hall | | Valley | |
| Hamilton | | Washington | |
| Harlan | | Wayne | 44 |
| Hitchcock | | Webster | |
| Holt | | Wheeler | |
| Hooker | | York | 72 |
| Howard | 24 | Total Served | 64-0 |
| | | TOTAL SELVEN | D177 |

FUNDING

Every \$1.00 appropriated for Vocational Rehabilitation by the Unicameral earns \$3.69 Federal funding and yields \$4.69 in services to Nebraskans with disabilities.

THE AVERAGE WAGE FOR SUCCESSFULLY EMPLOYED VR CLIENTS

| Average wage for 2012 | \$10.32 |
|---------------------------------------|---------|
| 62% of clients are employed full-time | |

2012 Nebraska VR Employment Program

| Applied for Services | 5,246 |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Received Services | 6,172 |
| Successfully Employed | 1,806 |

2012 OCCUPATION & EARNINGS FOR COMPETITIVELY EMPLOYED CONSUMERS

| Occupations | Percent | Average Hourly Earnings |
|--------------------------------------|---------|----------------------------|
| Services | 34.9% | \$8.61 |
| Office Support | 14.8% | \$9.72 |
| Sales | 10.9% | \$8.74 |
| Professional | 10.4% | \$13.78 |
| Transportation & Material Moving | 8.6% | \$10.37 |
| Production | 8.3% | \$10.62 |
| Installation, Maintenance, & Repairs | 4.6% | \$10.66 |
| Construction & Extraction | 3.4% | \$11.45 |
| Management, Business, & Finance | 2.3% | \$15.82 |
| Farming, Fishing, & Forestry | 1.8% | \$10.53 |

Partnerships with Employers & Nebraska VR

Some of the Companies Working with Nebraska VR

St Elizabeth Regional Medical Cntr 21st Century Equipment **FBG Service Corporation** Marianna Industries Saint Francis Medical Center **AbilityOne** Firestone Marsden Maintenance Access Electric First National Bank Mary Lanning Mem HealthCare Sodexo **ADM** Five Guys Burgers & Fries Menards Spherion Affordable Electric Flexcon Methodist Hospital Standard Parking Amcon Distributing Co. Fremont Area Medical Center Mid City Recycling State of Nebraska American Red Cross Good Samaritan Hospital Middleton Electric T & L Irrigation American Security Goodwill Ind. of Greater NE, Inc. Mt. Carmel Nursing Home Tabitha Health Care Services Apogee Retail, LLC Great Plains Regional Medical Cntr Mutual of Omaha Taco Johns **Target** Associated Staffing Inc. Hamilton Communication Neapco Behlen Mfg. Co. Heartland Electric NE Game & Parks Commission NE Com/Blind & Visually Impaired Best Buy Home Depot **NE Machine Products** The Lexington **Bosselman Travel Centers** Home Instead Senior Care NE Home Builders Assoc. Tires Plus Cabelas Inc. Norfolk Iron & Metal Co. TO Haase Hormel Camaco Hy-Vee **Novartis** Torin Products, Inc. **NPPD** Cargill InfoUSA TravelCenters of America Integrated Electrical Services Omaha Steel Treat America Food Services Cargill Meat Solutions Omaha Tribe of NE Chief Industries, Inc. **Jackson Services** University of NE-Kearney City of Lincoln/Lancaster County **Oriental Trading Company** University of NE-Lincoln Jensen Tire and Auto Walgreens City of Kearney-Recycling Center Pamida Jeri's Cleaning Service CJ Foods Katanna Summit Pizza Hut Walker Tire Columbus Community Hospital Kearney Area Children's Museum Prairie View Gardens Walmart Distribution Center Columbus Hydraulics Kearney Yamaha ProPax Corp. Walmart Stores Community Action Partnership Kmart Rail Crew Xpress West Corporation Commonwealth Electric West Pharmaceuticals Lincoln Downtown Association Ratigan-Schottler Regional West Medical Center Western NE Community College Creative Dining Services Lincoln Journal Star Lincoln Public Schools Reinke Manufacturing, Inc. Wimmer's Meat Products Inc. Days Inn & Suites Lindsay Manufacturing Co. Russ's Market Faith Regional Health Services Farmland Foods/Cooks Ham Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital Safeway

Return on Investment for the Nebraska VR Program

On average, a successfully employed person returns \$12.55 to the taxpayers for every \$1 spent through Nebraska VR services.

| Average Cost of Vocational Rehabilitation Services per Person: | \$12,112.76 |
|---|--------------|
| Average Annual Earnings after Vocational Rehabilitation Services: | \$17,992.00 |
| Estimated Annual Taxes on Earnings: | |
| Federal Income Tax | \$1,423.13 |
| State Income Tax | \$530.79 |
| State/Local Sales Tax | \$305.78 |
| Social Security Tax | \$2,806.10 |
| Average Total Taxes per Year | \$5,065.80 |
| Average Return to Taxpayers over 30 Remaining Years of Employment | \$151,974.26 |

Nebraska VR Client Success Stories



BRYAN BELL

Bryan Bell is a veteran with ten years of service to his country. During that time he was a mechanic as well as a photographer for the Navy. A service related disability brought Bryan to Nebraska VR.

Bell Photography, LLC began with assistance from Nebraska VR and Nebraska Self Employment Services (NSES). Bryan's Omaha business has seen an 850% increase in revenues from 2010 to 2011. In addition, he recently began teaching photography at a local middle school. Bryan has been a guest speaker at NE Self Employment workshops, sharing his story of success with the aspiring entrepreneurs who experience a disability.

Bell Photography's services capture weddings, graduations, sports, and commercial photography. He also offers personalized training for those interested in learning how to become better photographers.

Bryan's success and community contribution was recognized by the SRC with a 2012 Entrepreneur of Distinction Award.



DANIELLE KROTZ

Danielle Krotz graduated from the 2012 Project SEARCH class at Kearney's Good Samaritan Hospital training site. This onthe-job training program is a partnership with Nebraska VR, local businesses, local schools, NE Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Partnership, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities. She trained for a variety of food service and house keeping jobs.

After graduation, she found a job at Dickey's BBQ pit. Danielle's job coach helped Danielle learn specific job tasks. Her success can be attributed to her hard work, supportive family, helpful team of co-workers, and Nebraska VR staff helping to find the right job to fit her needs.

Danielle is an inspiring young woman born with developmental challenges. She has difficulties in communication, social interaction, and time management. She volunteers at the Humane Society and is involved with the ARC and Special Olympics.



LAWRENCE ALLEN TARR

Scottsbluff's Lawrence Allen Tarr had difficulty when he attempted automotive technology at Western Nebraska Community College after high school. It was a struggle to learn in a traditional classroom setting.

Allen turned to Scottsbluff's Nebraska VR staff for help with employment planning. He needed training in a hands-on environment and help with social skills.

He was trained to be an electrician's helper through a VR on-the-job training program. After completion of the training he was employed full-time at Adams Electric Services. Allen has worked on the remodel of the Scottsbluff State Office Building where Nebraska VR is housed.

Allen, a single father, was presented the 2012 Debra Bowers Success Award. The Award recognizes a VR client who has achieved employment success while overcoming adversity.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Columbus serves counties: Butler, Colfax, Nance, Platte and Polk 3100 23rd Street, Ste. 5, Columbus, NE 68601

(402) 562-8065 V/TTY, (877) 505-0866 V/TTY VR.InfoColumbus@nebraska.gov

Fremont serves counties:

Dodge

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Grand Island serves counties:

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Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan, Sioux

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